

THE SHAKERITE

February 26, 2009 • Volume 79 • Issue 5 • Shaker Heights High School • 15941 Aldersyde Drive • Shaker Heights, Ohio 44120

DONATING LIFE

Bimonthly Red Cross Bloodmobiles provide Shaker students an opportunity to give a little of themselves: a pint of their blood. See how a little generosity can save lives in The Beat.

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BEHIND SANKOFA SCENES

EVERYONE'S FAVORITE ACTION-PACKED PERFORMANCE IS BACK, THIS TIME WITH EMPHASIS ON DANCING. HEAD OVER THE LIMELIGHT FOR A VISIT WITH THIS YEAR'S SANKOFA DANCE CAPTAINS.

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JAIL BREAK FOR SENIORS

THEY'RE NOT ORANGE JUMPSUITS, BUT THEY MAY AS WELL BE. THE CLASS OF 2009'S JAIL-THEMED SENIOR SWEATS HAVE PROVOKED COMPLAINTS, BUT THEY ARE WITHIN STUDENTS' FREE SPEECH RIGHTS. CHECK OUT NOTEWORTHY TO SEE WHY ADMINISTRATORS HAVE HELD THEIR TONGUES.

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CRAMMING FOR COLLEGE

SIT DOWN AND TALK ABOUT YOURSELF. SIMPLE, RIGHT? NOT WHEN YOUR COLLEGE ADMISSION MAY DEPEND ON WHAT YOU SAY. THE BEAT OFFERS A WAY TO ENSURE YOU'LL BE AT LEAST A LITTLE PREPARED FOR YOUR COLLEGE INTERVIEWS.

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What's Inside

02.26.09



COVER SHOT

Vials of Shaker students' blood wait to be packed up at the Red Cross Bloodmobile Feb. 6. The Red Cross makes bimonthly trips to the school, and students and teachers 17 and older may sign up to donate blood during the day. Because congratulatory snacks are provided and students are excused, the incentive to give is high.

DIANA JACK



EDITOR'S NOTE 20 more days stinks, literally

The state of Ohio is about to smell a whole lot worse. If Gov. Ted Strickland gets what he wants, Ohio students will stew their in schools for 20 extra days in the summer. Although the body odor of 2,000 students and faculty members is a fairly serious problem, far worse issues arise when contemplating the effect Strickland's plan would have on education.

The plan, which would be implemented over the next ten years, would in effect add another year of school to students' educations. It is not yet clear if there are directions for using the extra time, leading us to worry about wasted effort. Students lose interest in classes way before the school year ends, so it seems unlikely that anything productive would come of another 20 days.



DIANA JACK



ALEXA SYKES

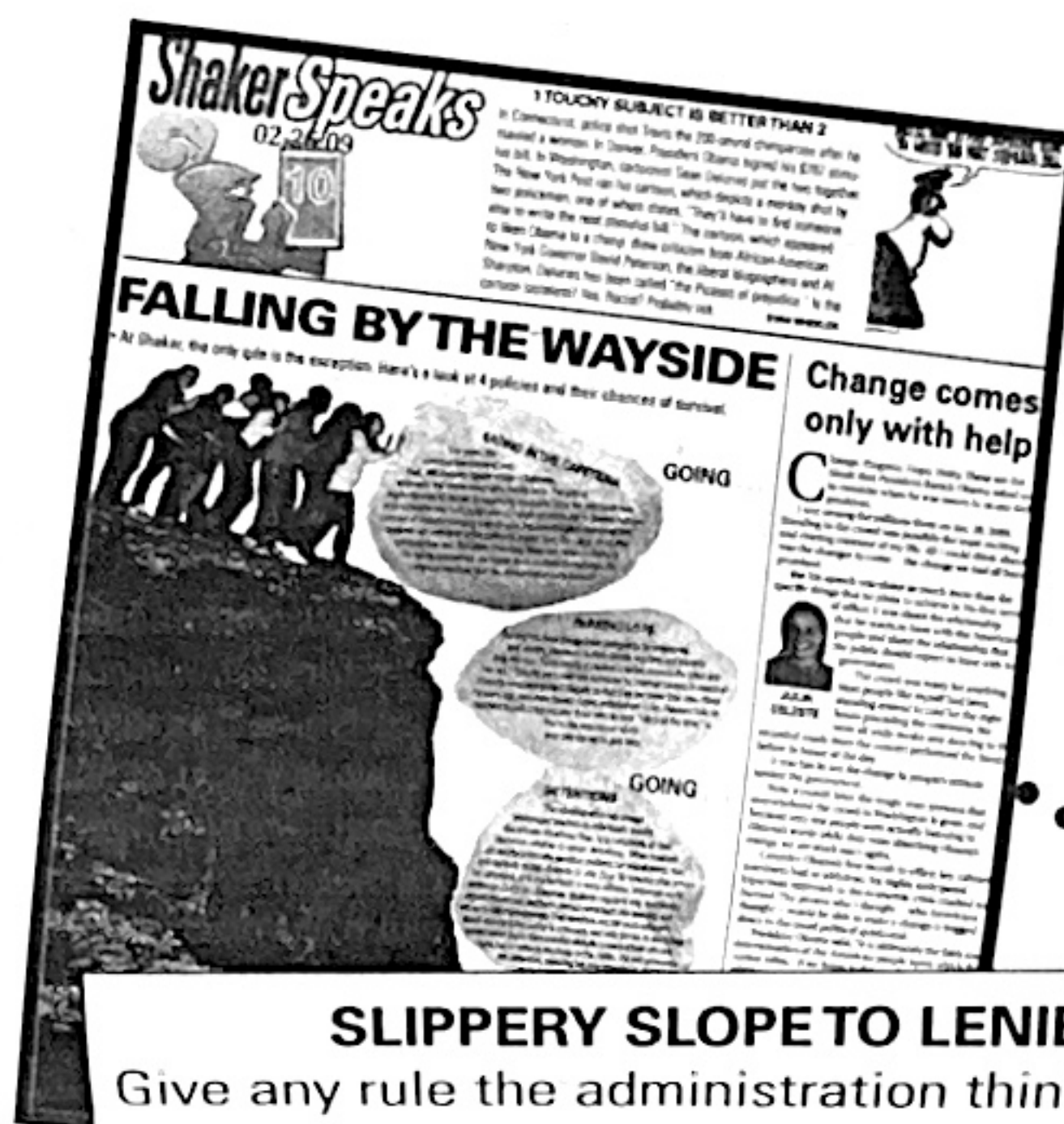
In addition to the murky nature of the anticipated extension, keeping schools open into the summer is a daunting financial prospect. School districts would have to pay teachers, administrators, secretaries, custodians, cafeteria staff and security for another month's work, not to mention the cost of electricity, fuel and maintenance of buses. (Not to mention an increase in fuel use would increase all of our carbon footprints). Twenty days is a ninth of the school year, so the budget would have to be expanded to include those expenses.

Most importantly, summer provides the only chance for teenagers to relax. As busy and involved as students are these days, we believe they deserve as much time off as they can get. (As a side note, if the school year were extended, would sports be also? Heat stroke would become a serious liability). Outside of relaxing, summer is also the only time many students can get jobs -- which pay for college and fund trips to other countries (which colleges love to see) -- and catch up on reading they have been putting off.

English teacher Paul Springstubb's critique of Strickland's plan was published in The Plain Dealer Feb. 8. He emphasized that students need time off in order to prepare to learn more the next year. "The problem is emphatically not one of too few days in school; it is a problem of the spirit," Springstubb wrote. "It is a very misleading idea that more time in school means more time learning," he explained in an interview. More importantly, he noted that the environment in which students are raised affects academic achievement more than the number of school days does. "An oppressive environment impacts our students far more than we have been willing to acknowledge."

If the state creates some useful purpose and resources for the extra 20 days, the plan may provide some aid to schools; teachers may be able to take more time with difficult concepts rather than rushing to beat the June 10 deadline. However, if we fix our mentality, lessen the pressure on students and let everyone be a kid again, students might be more willing and excited to learn each year. The state would do well to rethink its plan and refocus efforts on quality rather than quantity of education.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR THIS MONTH



SLIPPERY SLOPE TO LENIENCY
Give any rule the administration thinks up about a month; it'll be forgotten by then. With Shaker students under the impression that they can wiggle their way out of any situation, Shaker Speaks explores which policies are falling out of use.

STANDING TALL ABOVE THE COMPETITION

Senior basketball star Karisma Penn has been at the top of her game since elementary school, and after graduation she will take her talent to the University of Illinois. Find out what makes her stand out in Raider Zone.



Hit the Books in Style

Wanna change your look? Then here's your chance! At Plato's Closet, we buy and sell brand name gently used teen and twenty something clothing for guys and girls. That means you can afford to rock Abercrombie & Fitch, American Eagle, Hollister and your other faves all year long for less than half the price of new. Change is good, so Change Your Clothes.

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THE SHAKERITE
Volume 79 • Issue 4
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The Shakerite is a public forum published nine times a year for and by students of Shaker
Heights High School. Readers may reach The Shakerite at 216.295.6210. The Shakerite
is a member of the National Scholastic Press Association, Columbia Scholastic Press
Association and Northeast Ohio Scholastic Press Association.



MARCH

This Month
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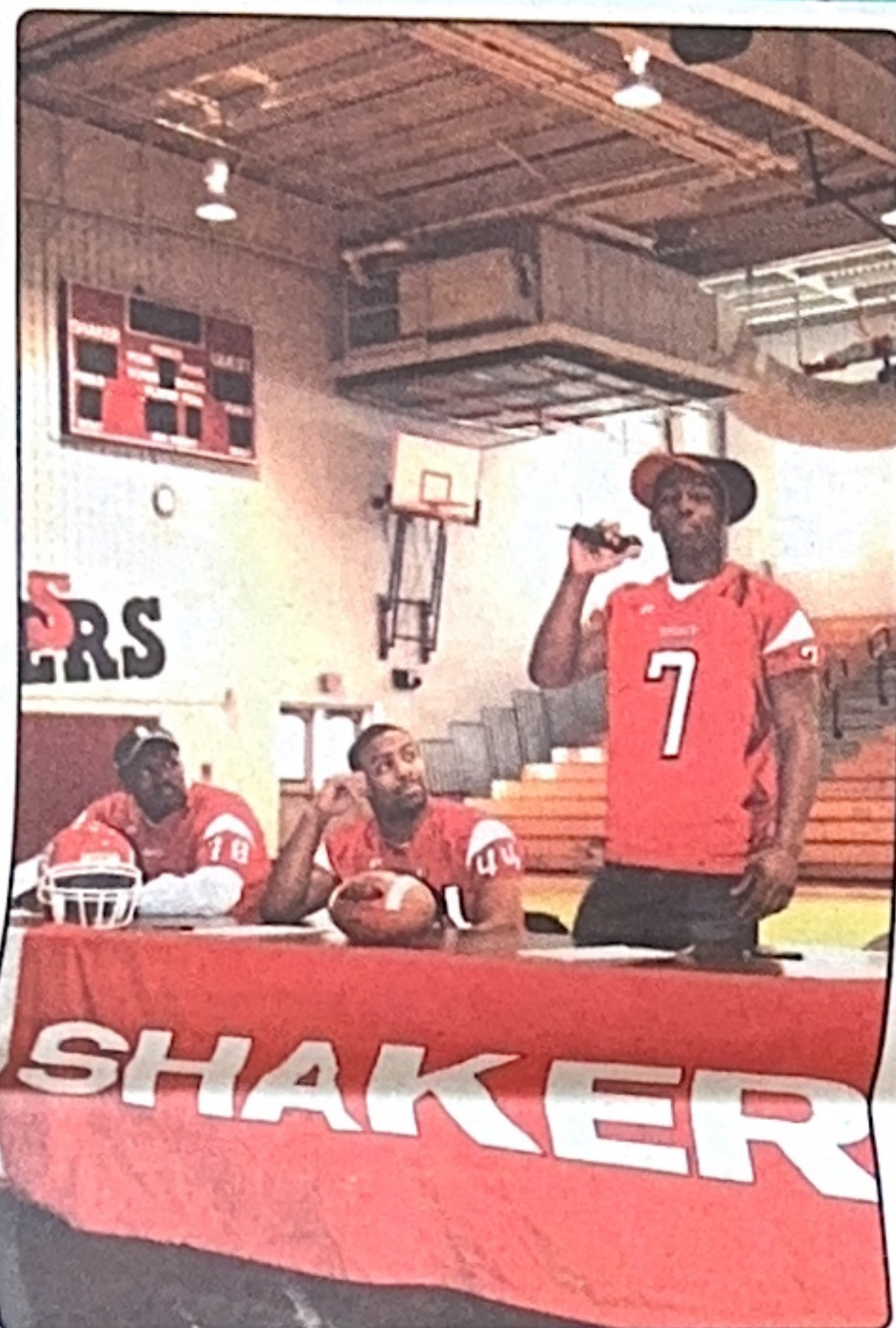


Photo by Julia Celeste

SENIORS HENRY CONRAD and Roman Lawson look on as Perez Ashford announces his decision to attend Northern Illinois during the signing ceremony Feb. 4.

Sign on the line

• Four Raiders' recruiting journeys conclude with signing ceremony



Perez Ashford
football

It's a relief for the recruitment process to be over. I'm looking to go to a ball game and bring back a trophy and a ring.

Perez Ashford compiled three successful seasons as a varsity wide receiver for Shaker and will take his skills to the Salukis of Northern Illinois University.



Roman Lawson
football

The recruitment process was very tedious and insightful and I'm glad it is over with. I can't wait to be a RedHawk.

Running back Roman Lawson anchored for the football team for four years, and he will compete in the Mid American Conference with Miami University.



Henry Conway
football

It truly is a blessing. It's great to have the weight off my shoulders. Now I'm thinking about getting a prom date and school work.

Henry Conway has proven himself to be one of the most coachable student-athletes at Shaker and will join the offensive line of Michigan State Spartan next year.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 The Temptations and the Four Tops at the Palace Theatre @ 7:30 p.m.	2 THE ULTIMATE	3	4	5	6	7 A Night for the Red & White at the Intercontinental Hotel @ 7 p.m.
8	9	10	11	12	13	14 Welcome to the Jungle Dance at the high school 8-11 p.m.
15	16	17 St. Patrick's Day	18 Classes start @ 11:45 for everyone not testing!	19	20	21
22	23 EAGLES	24 The Eagles at The Q @ 8 p.m.	25	26	27 B.B. King at the House of Blues @ 8 p.m.	28 Katy Perry at the House of Blues @ 7 p.m.
29	30	31	SPRING BREAK THROUGH APRIL 5			



Lizzie Helfrich
field hockey

This Month sat down with four-year varsity field hockey player Lizzie Helfrich to talk about the recruitment process.

This Month: Did you always want to play in college?

Lizzie: Yeah, pretty much.

TM: How did you choose Michigan State University?

L: I'm going into [pre-veterinary medicine]. Their field hockey program is the best out of the schools I looked at that offered pre-vet.

TM: How were you recruited?

L: The MSU coaches first saw me play at summer camp and let me know they were interested. They continued to watch me play through high school and eventually I committed.

TM: When did you commit?

L: I verbally committed at the end of March last year.

TM: How did you verbally commit?

L: I called the coaches and told them that I was verbally committing to coming to Michigan State University and playing for them and that I was ending my recruitment process.

Compiled by Abby Schiller

NoteWorthy

02.26.09



DATES CHANGED FOR UPCOMING DANCES

The Winter Ball has been moved to March 14 after numerous date changes. Originally, the dance was to occur on Feb. 7; however, both the North and South Gym were unavailable. As a result of this change, the Spring Fling has tentatively been moved to April 25. "We have decided to make Spring Fling on the same day as our school's carnival," said junior Murphy Metheny, who is the head of the Student Council dance committee. At press time, the Student Council was debating both April 18 and May 9 as other possible dates.

VICTORIA FIDRYCH



MORE STATE REQUIREMENTS HEADED YOUR WAY



Strickland

Between the Ohio Graduation Test, Terra Nova, and Advanced Placement exams, it seems the list of standardized testing never ends. But students may face yet another round of exams if Gov. Ted Strickland's education plan, which includes "end of course tests," is passed by the legislature. Those tests and other changes, including 20 more school days, would be implemented over the next eight years.

THE PLAN

MORE CLASSES? GREAT.

With the first part of the plan, not only will core classes such as math and science be required, but also other courses that expand global awareness and life skills would also be part of the curriculum. These courses would develop skills such as creativity, critical thinking and problem solving. Strickland's plan suggests that such courses would appeal to different kinds of learners.

KISS ONE MONTH OF SUMMER GOODBYE.



Future Shaker students would also find their summers reduced by a third with the proposed addition of 20 school days to the calendar. This would bring the state requirement up to 200 days, which is the international average. The days would be added over the next 10 years.

GO, FIGHT, THINK!

The state would promote competitive academic events with the creation of the Ohio Academic Olympics. These statewide competitions would promote and award success in science, math, writing, debate, arts and technology. The department of education would organize the Olympics.

OUT WITH THE OGT, IN WITH THE ACT.

While the OGT's days would be over, an equal if not more unappealing testing regimen could be put into place: the ACT Plus. This test would be given as a four-part "assessment" comprising the ACT test, end of course tests, a service learning project, and a senior project. Although Shaker recently installed and removed senior project as a graduation requirement, Strickland's plan would reverse that decision.



YOUR TEACHER MAY NOT BE HERE TODAY. OR EVER AGAIN.

Students aren't the only ones who would face stricter regimens: teachers and administrators would feel the pressure, too. New teachers would undergo a residency program called "Teach Ohio" in which more experienced teachers would mentor them in efficient teaching methods. Included in Strickland's plan is a measure that makes it easier to fire teachers. Historically, teachers have earned tenure after three years. Tenure is a form of job security intended to protect competent teachers from being fired for their personal beliefs or for personality conflicts with administrators, school board members, students or parents. Strickland's plan would make teachers wait nine years before applying for tenure.

THE PLAN'S JUST THAT-- A PLAN

Although Strickland's education plan is daunting, it is just a plan. Before becoming reality, it has to be approved by the state legislature. And if approved, the plan would be put into place over an eight-year period, at the earliest. This means the first class to truly feel the effects of the plan would be 2018. When the plan is in place, according to the state, they will have met their constitutional requirement to all Ohio children, something the Ohio Supreme Court mandated in 1997.

Compiled by Victoria Fydrich



A CUSTODIAN CLEARS snow from in front of the school building Jan. 28, when 12 inches of snow fell. Despite the winter storm, schools remained open.

Victoria Fydrich • The Shakerite

CALL TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT

Students, staff struggle to reach school Jan. 28 as Shaker is 1 of only 3 districts to hold classes

BY VICTORIA FIDRYCH
NOTEWORTHY EDITOR

Let it snow, let it snow, let it snow. But be prepared to trudge through knee-high drifts and drive on treacherous roads, Shaker students, because you're still going to school.

Students, staff and faculty were expected to attend school Jan. 28 despite broadcast warnings from police



Freeman

to stay off roads and the closing of 20 school districts in Cuyahoga County. The roads were so dangerous that one teacher reported losing control and nearly hitting a man who was trying to

free his vehicle from snow. "I almost killed a man on my way to work," the teacher stated on an anonymous faculty survey regarding the day's commute.

Such days reinforce Shaker's reputation of keeping school open, no matter the severity of weather conditions.

Although Freeman makes the final decision to call off school, a number of others in the city are consulted. The people involved, according to Freeman, include "our building and grounds staff who prepare the buildings... [and] the city and city service department." These individuals confer with other cities' officials.

Freeman said that his decision is made with students in mind. "First and foremost is safety of the students and staff," he said. Employees who took highways to school took upwards of two hours to arrive, and some did not make it to work at all. Teachers were so enraged -- fearing for the safety and well being of both students and staff -- that Shaker Heights Teachers Association President Rebecca Thomas wrote a letter on their behalf to Freeman.

"Not only did we all brave horrendous weather conditions to arrive at our schools, we then faced conditions that were even worse on the way home," Thomas wrote. By the end of the day, approximately 12 inches of snow had fallen. Drifts were much deeper; snow on the ground in Shaker measured 17 inches by 4:50 p.m.

Freeman recognized the risk not only lay with the roads, but also with the drivers.

"We're also talking about some students who are inexperienced drivers. If there's inclement weather, then I believe that makes it even more dangerous [for them]," he said. His own drive to work was hindered by "traffic [that] was exceptionally slow." And yet, he chose to keep schools open.

Freeman received varied opinions from students as well as faculty. "Most [responses] are negative; that's generally the case with school closings," Freeman said.

One of these responses came from concerned senior Dylan Tussel. "I ask that you please put a little more consideration into

the safety of the students and faculty," he stated in an email message to Freeman.

Student attendance varied, with many late to their first period classes and some who chose not to brave the walk or drive at all. One was senior Ashlie Martin, who did not attend school. "We started swerving [on the road] so we just decided to turn around," she said. Freeman agreed that parents are always welcome to keep their children at home if they deem the weather too dangerous.

"I left in the middle of the day because my mom didn't want me to drive later," said junior Bridget Mearns, who added that when she left, her car was already snowed in.

By the end of the day, custodians were helping teachers and students dig their cars out and push them out of parking spaces.

Asked whether he would change his decision, Freeman said, "I think many people would disagree with the decision to stay open Wednesday. I'm aware of that... I think Wednesday was what I would call a close call."



HEAVY SNOWFALL THROUGHOUT the day left cars buried. Many had to be pushed out of unplowed lots.

Miriam Chelmski • The Shakerite

BREAKING OUT OF SHAKER?

• Senior sweats raise concern regarding school's image

BY NATALIE VICCHIO
NOTEWORTHY EDITOR

Judging by the design of their sweats, senior Student Council members took a literal view of Assistant Principal Eric Hutchinson's use of the term Big House.

The art on the back of the sweatshirt will portray the Shaker Raider pulling apart prison bars. The slogan "We've Done Our Time" appears beneath the image. On the sweatpants' left hip, an open handcuff replaces the zeros in 2009.

President of the high school Parent Teacher Organization Normella Walker questions if this means there are experiences at Shaker that qualify as punishment. "Prison's a serious thing," she said. Walker said she understands what the seniors are trying to convey, but believes that others' opinions will vary.

The biggest controversy concerned the handcuffs functioning as zeroes, which were initially placed on the front of the sweatshirt. Located on the hip instead, the image is more easily covered by a shirt. In the original design, the Raider was not pulling apart the jail bars, but stuck behind them. Hutchinson, who advises Student Council, said that a Raider completely jailed contradicted the slogan, which suggests seniors have been freed from high school.

He suggested to senior class President Lauren Holloway and Senior Adviser Julia Rossi that the design be modified to emphasize the theme of leaving prison. "Because it is in some ways a risky design . . . you want to make sure it's done in somewhat good taste," Hutchinson said.

Because the revised design was not available to seniors before

they reserved their sweats, those who already ordered the original version will not receive what they paid for. Holloway doesn't anticipate a problem with the switch, however.

"There's not going to be a lot of protest. They [the seniors] might like it better," Holloway said.

Senior Jeff Reese does not like either design, but he prefers the adjusted one. "I didn't like the Raider behind the jail bars," he said.

Shaker does not have the legal right to forbid the design. According to the Student Press Law Center, unless the clothing is disruptive or offensive, students are protected by the First Amendment, which guarantees freedom of expression. The image and corresponding tagline are not profane or libelous.

Principal Michael Griffith encourages students to express themselves. "We don't censor," he said, although he questioned whether the message on the senior sweats communicates well to the public.

The design joins a list of increasingly provocative messages finding their way onto clothing student groups create. Most involve sexual innuendo, such as T-shirts that promise to "Puck you up."

Student freedom extends only so far until the school decides to intervene. According to Director of Communications Peggy Caldwell, if the high school finds that the piece of clothing unsafe, disruptive to the learning environment or shows obscene material they can ask the child to remove it. Caldwell believes the senior sweats are meant to be a snide joke, and does not think they make a statement about Shaker education.

Holloway defends the design. "The whole senior sweats thing is not that big of a deal," she said. "We can't please everyone, but we're trying to get everyone we can." According to Holloway, no student has complained to her personally and she feels that this is an accomplishment, because, "The class of 2009 is very opinionated."

CLASS OF
2009



We've Done Our Time!

THE RAIDER BEHIND bars, drawn by senior Joe Schorgl and destined for the back of the senior hoodie, was swapped for a Raider breaking out.

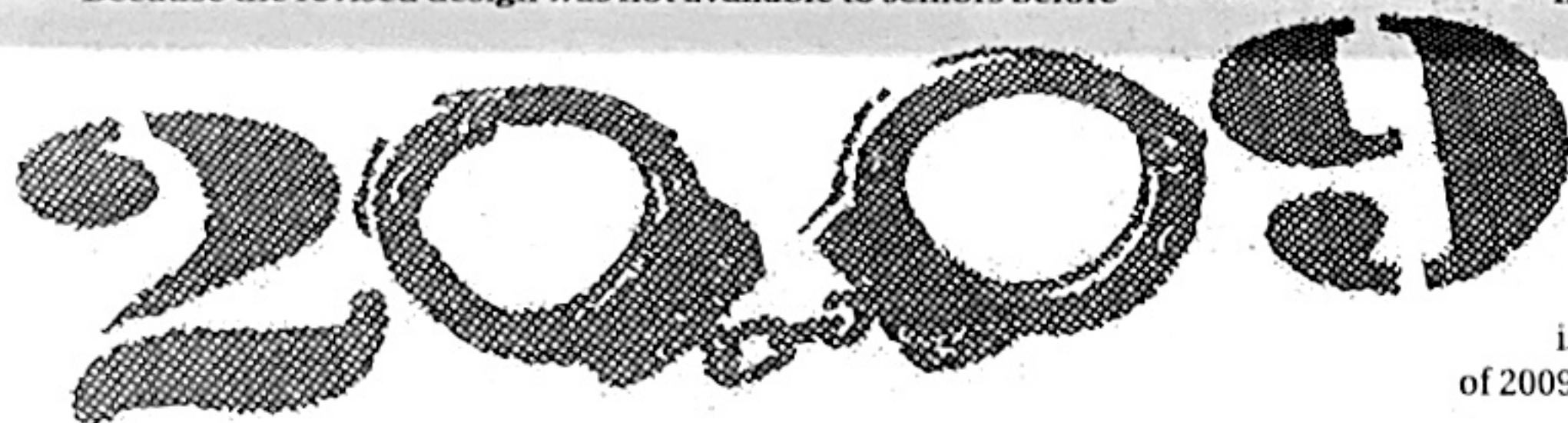
by the #s

132
Seniors ordered
2009 sweats

\$40 Average price of complete
senior sweatsuit*

*Prices vary depending on size

Compiled by Natalie Vicchio



Rowdy behavior closes cafeteria after school

BY NATALIE VICCHIO
NOTEWORTHY EDITOR

Students can say goodbye to long afternoons spent mingling in the lower cafeteria after school.

Fed up with the rowdy, unproductive atmosphere in the area, the administration has made it unavailable to students from 3-4 p.m., but will reopen it following conference period.

The original purpose of the lower cafeteria was to provide students with a place to wait for their rides home or for an activity occurring later in the evening.

However, according to Principal Michael Griffith, those students proved to "be a disturbance to other academics happening around the school . . . clubs should be able to hold meetings without people running around in the halls."

Griffith specified that the 3-4 p.m. time is "an academic time," allotted for conferences with teachers or attending school-sanctioned clubs. Assistant Principal Frank Wessinger agreed that students should make productive use of their time after school instead of wasting it idly in the cafeteria.

"Students would stay [in the cafeteria] until they were forced to leave," said Wessinger, who observed that some students consistently remained at school until 7 p.m., without ever leaving the cafeteria.

The primary purpose of the decision is to force students to attend conferences, according to Griffith.

"We want students to stay and be productive . . . in something that [the school offers]. If students are not allowed to work in the cafeteria,

then it might encourage them to work with one of their teachers," he said.

Griffith added that it is not the school's responsibility to watch over students long after activities conclude. "We don't have the staffing to be a daycare . . . that's not our role."

However, several students seem to have used the cafeteria as just that.

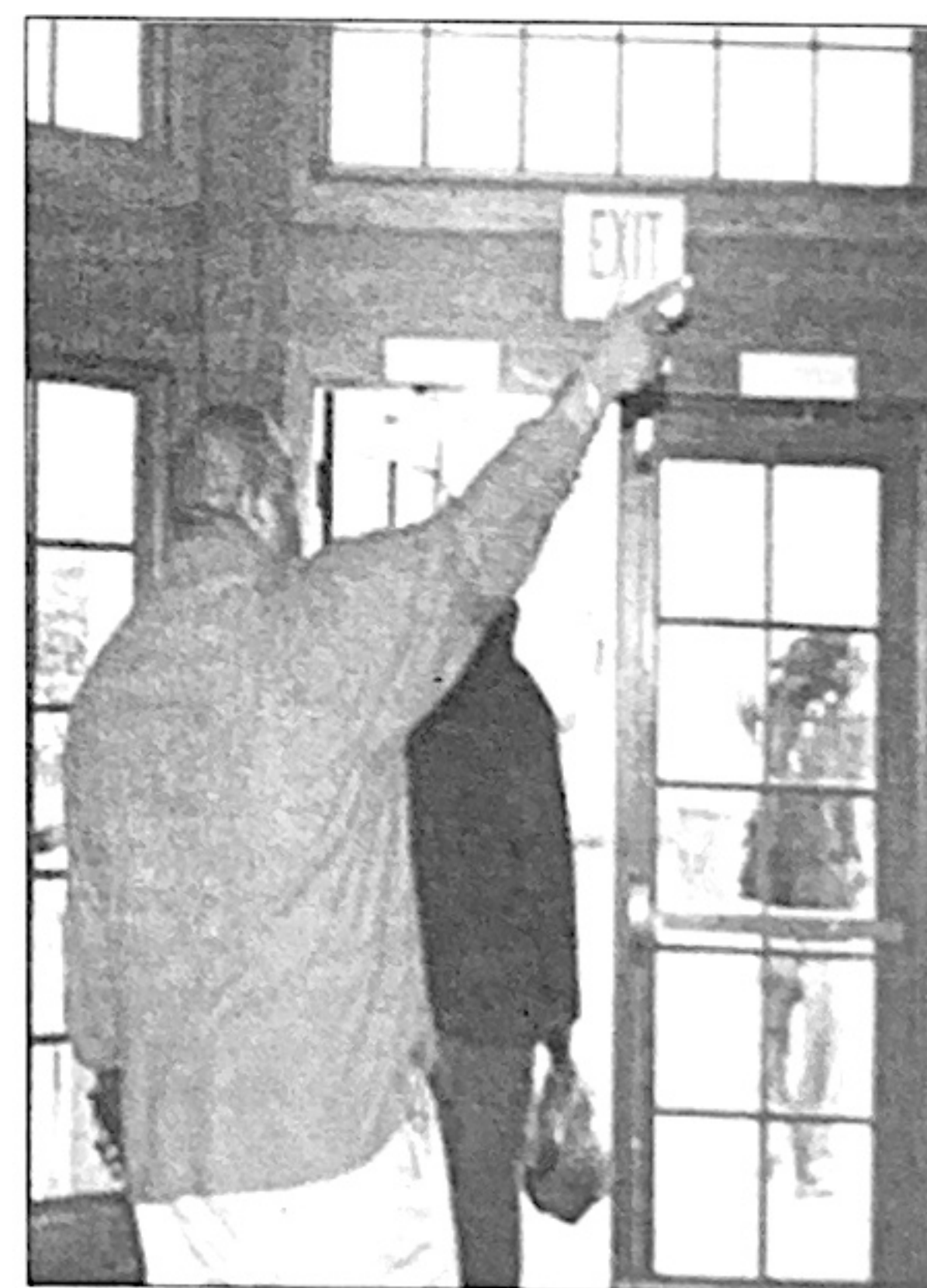
Students, such as freshman Calvin Welch, a frequent cafeteria inhabitant, speculated that its closing was most likely caused by disruptive behavior, unsuitable in a school setting. However, Welch misses the opportunity to purchase snacks immediately after school, commenting, "We can't get us no snacks no more."

Freshman Sean Person agreed, "We got nowhere else to hang out . . . where are we supposed to go?" The administration would quickly respond: conferences. However, Person and his group of friends now reside outside, near the lower cafeteria doors, waiting for them to reopen at 4 p.m.

To accommodate the closure of the lower cafeteria, Griffith wants to hire one new security guard to work until 7 p.m. each night. After that time, students must leave the building.

Although the high school already has three security guards scheduled for the night shift, Griffith does not want to detract their attention from the other areas of the building.

Nonetheless, the nation's rapidly declining economy does not make it easy for this addition, according to Wessinger. "We want to be prudent of the money we expend," he said.



Victoria Fydrich • The Shakerite

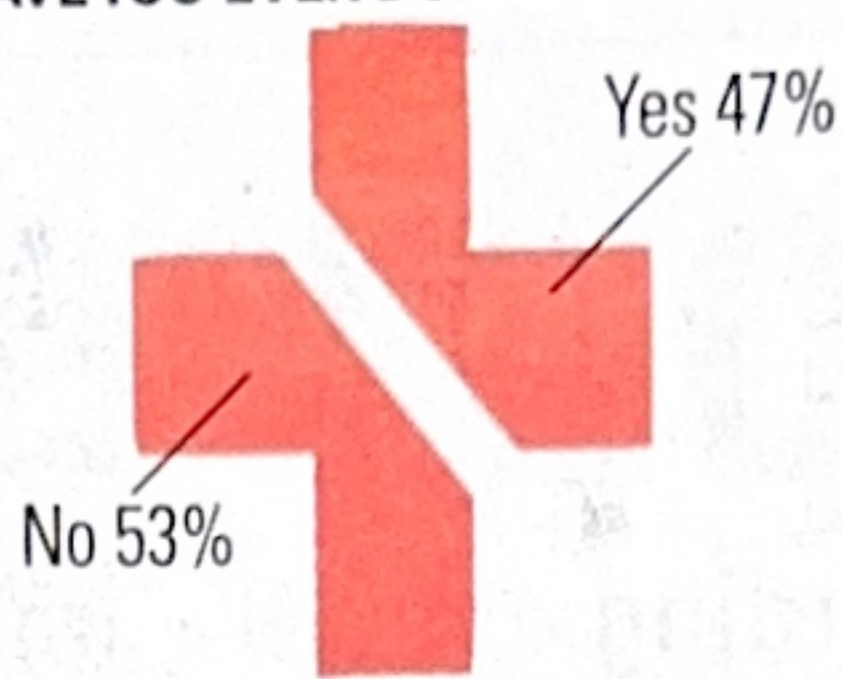
A SECURITY GUARD directs students to exit through the front entrance toward the cafeteria Feb. 17 after 4 p.m. The administration has closed the cafeteria during conferences.

If students are not allowed to work in the cafeteria then it might encourage them to work with one of their teachers.

Michael Griffith
Principal



HAVE YOU EVER DONATED BLOOD?



A scientific telephone poll of 100 students conducted by The Shakerite staff, margin of error +/- 10 percent.

WHY DO YOU DONATE BLOOD?



A scientific telephone poll of 100 students conducted by The Shakerite staff, margin of error +/- 10 percent.

Infographics by Taylor Smith

WE WANT YOUR BLOOD

• The Red Cross Bloodmobile visited the high school Feb. 6. Throughout the day, The Shakerite checked in to document students' experiences and to learn how the process works. Each student saved three lives by donating blood.



All photos by Allie Lavin - The Shakerite

Student hearts, and blood, in right place

BY TAYLOR SMITH
THE BEAT EDITOR

In Northeast Ohio alone, 900 pints of blood are needed each day to help keep people alive. While a pint isn't much (think of your daily cafeteria milk purchase), 900 pints equal about 56 gallons of blood.

It is not surprising, then, that the American Red Cross Bloodmobile will travel to as many as 25 locations a day to meet the quota, and the high school is one of its frequent destinations. Its most recent visit was Feb. 6.

In order to donate blood, you must weigh 110 pounds, be in good health, be 17 years old and have not donated blood in the past eight weeks. Because of the age requirement, most student donors are seniors, such as Joanie Clougherty and Andrew Grannis.

Clougherty has offered her arm twice despite a traumatic first experience. "They stuck the needle in my vein and missed about eight times," she said. "It scratched the inside of my vein so the nurse had to wiggle it in."

She returned to the Bloodmobile after that incident and plans to do so again. "I plan on donating blood whenever there is a blood drive until they stop wanting my blood," she said.

It is unlikely Clougherty's blood will ever be refused. According to the Red Cross website, someone in the United States needs blood every two seconds. The website features a counter that tallies the number of people in need as you view the page.

One side effect of donating is fainting, which both Clougherty and Grannis have experienced.

"It was strange. I was just sitting there talking to someone, then I woke up," Grannis said. "I never felt dizzy, lightheaded or anything like that."

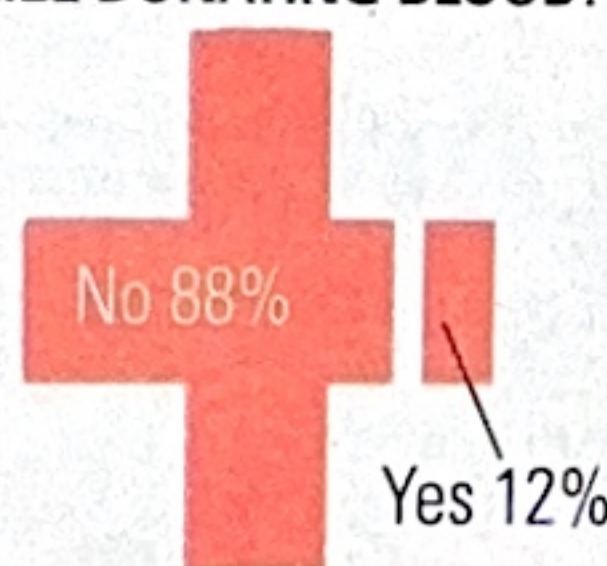
Grannis decided to skip this month's Bloodmobile visit, but not because he fainted. ("Passing out was kind of fun," he said.) A pitcher, Grannis didn't want to risk a sore arm with baseball season approaching.

While donating blood may not be too appealing, there is a significant turnout of students at the Bloodmobile during its bimonthly trips to the high school. According to Cristy Chapman, communications manager for the Red Cross, 18 to 20 percent of donated blood comes from high school students. It doesn't take too much time, and food is provided after the donation process.

For Clougherty, Grannis and students like them, donating is a moral imperative.

Grannis stated, "There are always going to be people who need a transfusion for one reason or another."

HAVE YOU EVER FAINTED WHILE DONATING BLOOD?



A scientific telephone poll of 100 students conducted by The Shakerite staff, margin of error +/- 10 percent.

Infographic by Taylor Smith



UPPER LEFT: Senior Kristen Sinicariello and Senior Class Adviser Julia Rossi being coached by Red Cross nurses as they get ready to donate. UPPER RIGHT: Student volunteers assist the Red Cross in assembling equipment to be used throughout the day. ABOVE: Students line up in the Egress and wait to be registered to donate blood. BELOW: Senior Nick Diederich answers qualifying health history questions in order to donate. BOTTOM LEFT: Senior Ben Giller and a Red Cross volunteer take time out of their days to volunteer.



Every 2 seconds, someone in the U.S. needs blood.

As many as 25 blood drives occur every day.

900 pints of blood are needed every day in Northeastern Ohio.

5% of the eligible U.S. population donates blood per year.

18-20% of donated blood comes from high school students.



Infographic by Taylor Smith

A MORE PERSONAL APPLICATION



• When a paper application just isn't enough, face-to-face interviews allow time to shine

BY ADRIA KINNEY
THE BEAT EDITOR

College interviews can be a frightening experience for any student, but some encounters can be particularly harrowing. According to guidance counselor Eileen Blattner, a Shaker student had a hellish experience, when, as an applicant to a Catholic university, she was asked about her position on abortion during an interview.

"This was a long, long time ago," Blattner said. "This doesn't happen anymore. The college interview has evolved from being evaluative to informative," she said, explaining that interviewers no longer try to trip up their interviewees.

Regardless, students who experience horrible interviews like this should not unduly worry. "The student ended up coming back and telling us about it, and I then spoke with the admissions department at the college," Blattner said.

Indeed, although interviews are meant to be a last opportunity for

students to earn a spot at their desired universities by showing off what they hope are their sparkling personalities, these encounters are often mine fields of social faux pas, forced conversation and overall awkwardness, even for typically poised and confident students.

Senior Allyson McClendon, for example, was caught completely off guard during her interview with a Wesleyan University representative when she was asked to talk about a book that reflected her personality.

"I ended up talking about a book I had read junior year ['Invisible Man'], McClendon said. She thought the question was not a fair choice to determine her character as an individual. "It didn't say anything about who I was as a person," said McClendon, who had responded with the first title

that came to mind.

Even if they are taken by surprise during interviews, guidance counselor David Peterjohn said students should just tell the truth. "Just try to be completely honest, and don't be afraid to fix mistakes," Peterjohn said. "If a question takes you by surprise, just tell the interviewer, 'I was kind of caught off guard.' Explain why you feel out of sorts," Peterjohn said.

Not all interviews, however, have to feel like interrogations. Many are actually quite conversational. "In my interview, we talked about current events and even debated," senior Sophia Bellin-Warren said.

"It helped me to feel comfortable... we talked about real issues instead of simply discussing my accomplishments or goals for the future."

McClendon also experienced a casual, if not interesting, interview. "Some interviewers just use the time to talk about themselves and give you life lessons for an hour," she said.

Although college interviews used to be required, it is mainly only small liberal arts schools

that still conduct them, as larger universities do not have the time it would require to interview their massive pool of applicants, Peterjohn explained. Ultimately, students should remember that an interview will not make or break an admissions decision.

"All of the interviewers I had started off the interview by saying that it probably wouldn't affect the admission decision one way or the other," McClendon said. "When I heard that, it... made me feel relieved, but it also made me wonder why I was about to waste my time."

Marketing the product

Quick! Let's hear your entire life story. Include your favorite subjects, your grades, every single extracurricular you've ever participated in, your job and all 17 years of volunteer work you've done.

What are the three most influential books you have read in the past year? Don't forget to explain your family, your parents' jobs, the number of siblings you have and the effect the economy is having on your finances. Finally, describe your plans for your future, your deepest passions and

they will turn into a career, what path you'll take to become what you want to be, and then why you would be perfect for this, just one of nine colleges you are applying to. Now do it for the other eight colleges.

DIANA JACK

Interviewing for colleges is nerve-racking and uncomfortable, no matter how accomplished you are. Many colleges offer alumni interviews for their applicants. They provide an opportunity for students to convey their personalities in ways the Common Application doesn't. Sometimes the alumni contact you personally, usually through email, and set up a time that works for both of you, but they can also set up a mass interview time, which is infinitely more annoying. Either way, interviewers are looking for articulate, intelligent people who communicate a reason for applying to their school. It's harder than it sounds, but here are a few key ways to make yourself sound less like a teenager.

1. Don't say "like." It really does make you sound 25 years older if you don't go through an hour-long interview saying, "And, you know, I, like, really like rowing because it like, gives me a group of people to like, fall back on"
2. Read the books you anticipate talking about. One of interviewers' favorite questions is "So, what books you have read in the past year or so?" Don't pretend you've read something you haven't. The interviewer is going to want to know what it's about, what you got out of it, what you enjoyed about the writing style, and any number of other questions that will end with you stammering something about "It's a good movie."

3. Don't brag. Interviewers usually aren't given your application and don't know anything about you other than your email address, so they will ask you about your extracurriculars and other responsibilities. However, they don't want a laundry list of things you were barely involved in. Mention them if truly necessary, but try to focus on the two or three nearest and dearest to you. Dedication is key.

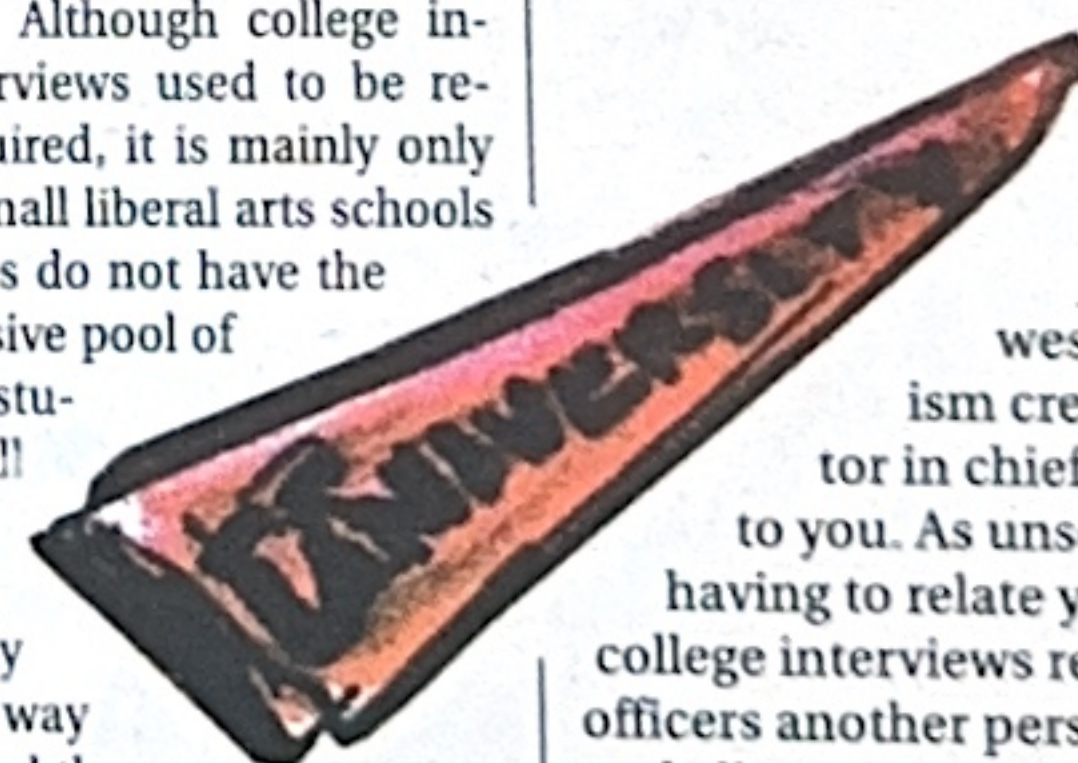
4. Remember, it's a conversation. College interviewers want to know all about you, but make sure to take a breather, drink your Starbucks, and listen to what they have to say. A lot of times, they will share information about their school that you are obliged to comment on.

5. Finally, tailor your list of interests to fit the bill of the current school. If you are applying to the journalism school at Northwestern, talk about your journalism credentials and why being editor in chief of The Shakerite is important to you. As unsettling as the prospect of having to relate your entire life story may be, college interviews really do give the admissions officers another perspective on your personality and allow you to learn more about the school. Provided, like, you can keep the likes, like, to a minimum, you know?

FIVE QUESTIONS TO PREPARE FOR

- Why do you want to attend our college?
- Which of your activities is most rewarding and why?
- What has been your biggest achievement?
- What's the most difficult situation you've faced?
- If you could change one thing about your high school, what would it be?

Compiled from www.collegeboard.com



Lime Light

02.26.08

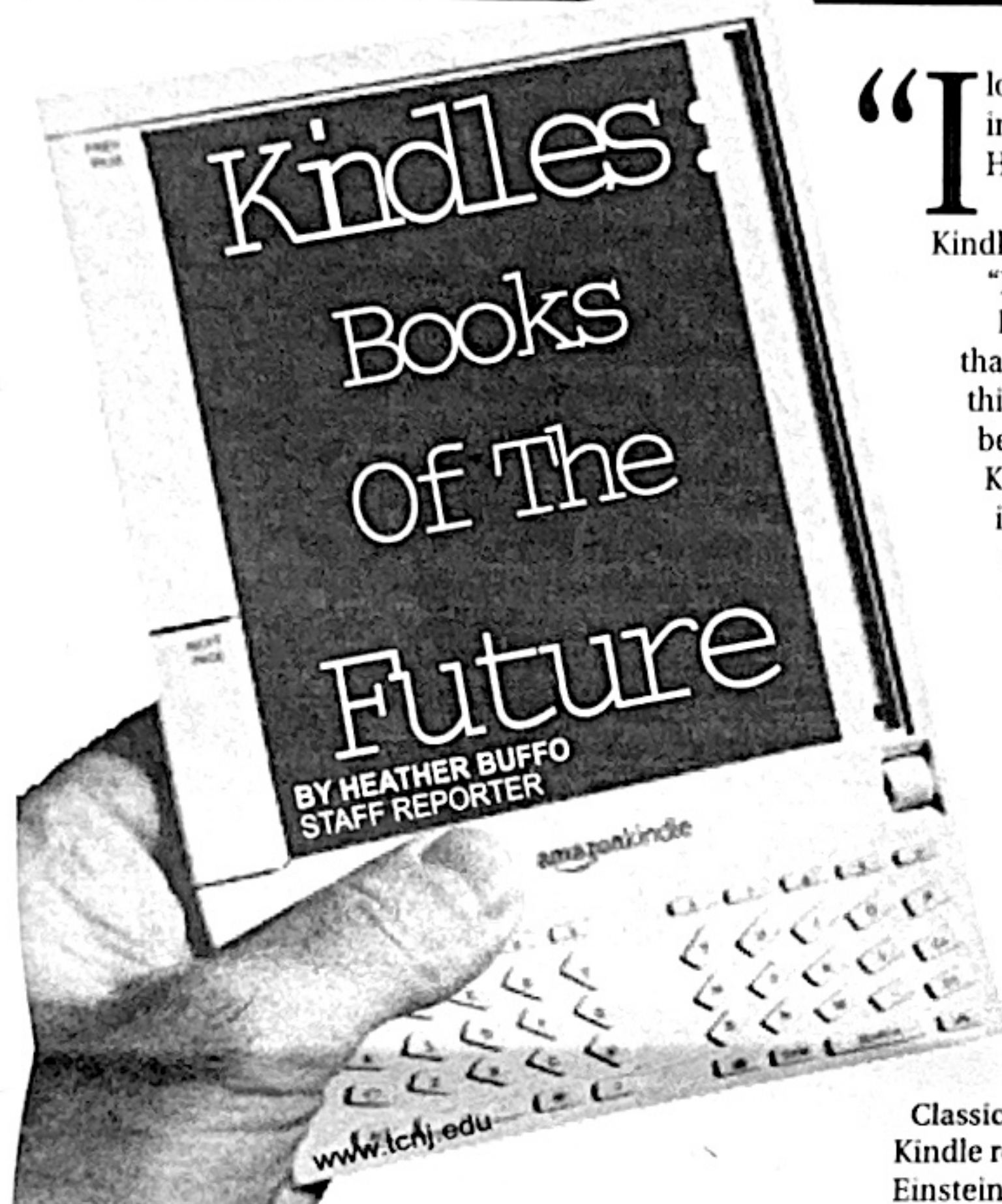
STUDENT PLAYLIST OF THE MONTH

Senior Chris Longman volunteered his top five picks for Limelight's Student Playlist of the Month feature. Why are all these songs in Longman's iPod? "I just like them," he said.

1. "Mr. Jones," Counting Crows
2. "Shine," Collective Soul
3. "Staring at the Sun," TV On The Radio
4. "Let It Be," The Beatles
5. "Notorious Thug," B.I.G.



Compiled by Simone Duval



"I love the feel of a paper book and cannot imagine not being able to literally turn pages," Shaker Heights High School librarian Patricia Lawrence said. Not surprisingly, electronic books -- namely Amazon.com's Kindle -- are nowhere in Lawrence's future.

"I do not own one and will not," she said.

Lawrence's comment resists the advent of a new technology that allows for the electronic reading of books. Ironically enough, this gadget is marketed by Amazon.com, an online retailer that began its business by selling books at affordable prices. The Kindle operates similarly to an iPod, except instead of holding a music library, it can hold up to 200 downloaded books, newspapers, magazines and blogs, the majority costing \$9.99 or less. The Kindle uses its own wireless network called Whispernet, which provides for quick downloading of any book, magazine, newspaper or blog from a selection of more than 230,000-plus titles.

"This is the future of book reading. It will be everywhere," stated Michael Lewis, a New York Times Best-selling author, on the Kindle product page.

Bethany Einstein, mother of junior Brienne Einstein, agrees. She has had her Kindle for one year, has purchased about 30 books from Amazon since then, and only has rave reviews concerning her portable library. "It's very, very small, it's lightweight, so you can bring 10 books with you anywhere," Einstein said.

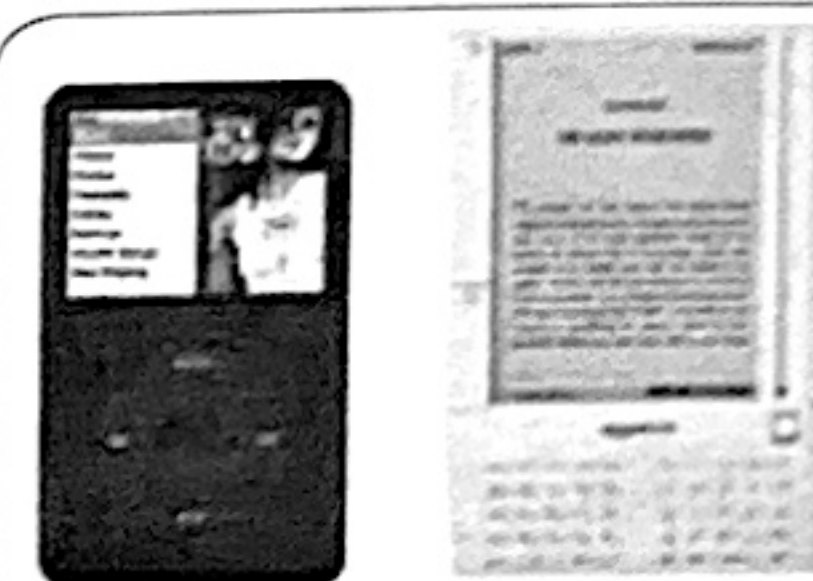
Weighing a mere 10.3 ounces (compared to the iPod Classic at 4.9 ounces) the Kindle offers features to help enhance the Kindle reading experience, such as a free trial of a book's first chapter. Einstein said she always uses the free trial before purchasing a book.

However, some booklovers feel an important element the Kindle lacks is the enjoyment a reader can derive from handling and reading a traditional book. Another feature that enhances Lawrence's dislike of Kindles is cost; the so-called E-book will set a reader back \$359.99 before book titles or other material have been purchased.

"Go to a library and take a book out for free," Lawrence said. "That \$359.99 is prohibitive."

E-book technology has stirred conversation about the future of traditional books. With an increased use of the Internet for almost any resource and the decrease of student interest in leisure reading, some readers fear the extinction of books as we know them.

"I do think that in years to come paper books will be outmoded because of ecological ramifications," Lawrence said. "Also... people will be brought up with electronic books, as I was with paper."



iPod Classic Amazon Kindle

Dimensions (in.)

4.1 x 2.4 x 0.4 7.5 x 5.3 x 0.7

Weight (oz.)

4.9 10.3

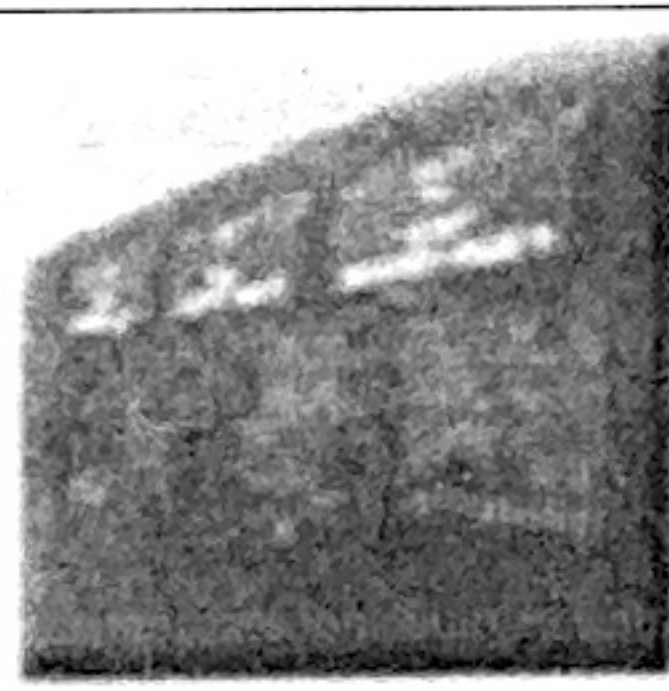
Memory

120 GB hard drive 25 GB hard drive plus 4 GB memory

Colors

Silver, Black Salmon-pink

Compiled by Heather Buffo
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Student composer scores film credits

BY SIMONE DUVAL
LIMELIGHT EDITOR

Jamal Dillman-Hasso, a 15-year-old sophomore, is a trumpet player in the band, a Palestinian supporter and a published composer. Dillman-Hasso began composing music at age eight, and today, he writes instrumental, vocal pieces and orchestral pieces,

two of which have been featured in independent films. Limelight talked with Dillman-Hasso about his next musical move.

S: What inspires you?

J: It depends on the style; sometimes it comes from other music I hear or listen to, or sometimes right when I wake up in morning I hear a great idea in my head. Sometimes it's something you just think about, but some of it you do have to brainstorm for, like all other forms of art.

S: How many pieces have you written?

J: I've written probably 17 pieces. Not counting the film scores, there are about two really complicated pieces. One of them is for solo piano, and I've heard it played before; the other is for full orchestra, and seeing as I haven't been able to afford a full orchestra, I've only been able to listen to it on my computer through the electronic playback.

S: How did you get the film opportunities?

J: I had met the director before he started to direct his first film, and he knew I loved music. I actually rashly asked him if I could write music for film,

and he let me compose a limited part of score, and [then]... ended up using more of my music. The two films are called "Lords of Praxton," and "...Breath of Courage." "Lords of Praxton" is science fiction, and "Breath of Courage" is more of a modern drama. "Breath of Courage" is... due to premier next summer. [Movie trailers for these two films can be found on YouTube.com.]

S: Did you read the scripts before composing?

J: Well I got the script about six months before filming and began writing scenes before I had the script, but I didn't get to coordinate the music until after the filming started. Then I got a rough copy of the film scenes from the director to coordinate with what was happening on screen, like with the timing of the music, as opposed to creating concepts of themes within the music.

S: Were you compensated, and was it enough to make you consider a career in composition?

J: No, film composers and independent film workers generally don't get a huge salary. I only got \$50 for the first score, and then a \$50 down payment from the second, but I'm expecting some royalties. [Moreover,] I see a career in musicianship in general but not for films. Film composing is very gratifying but you don't get a huge amount of control over the music.

S: If you could pick one movie to write a film score for, which one would it be and why?

J: Probably "Paradise Now." It's done by Palestinian director, and combines my favorite filmmaking techniques [and] types of music I like, but it also has a political struggle I can identify with.



Jamal Dillman-Hasso

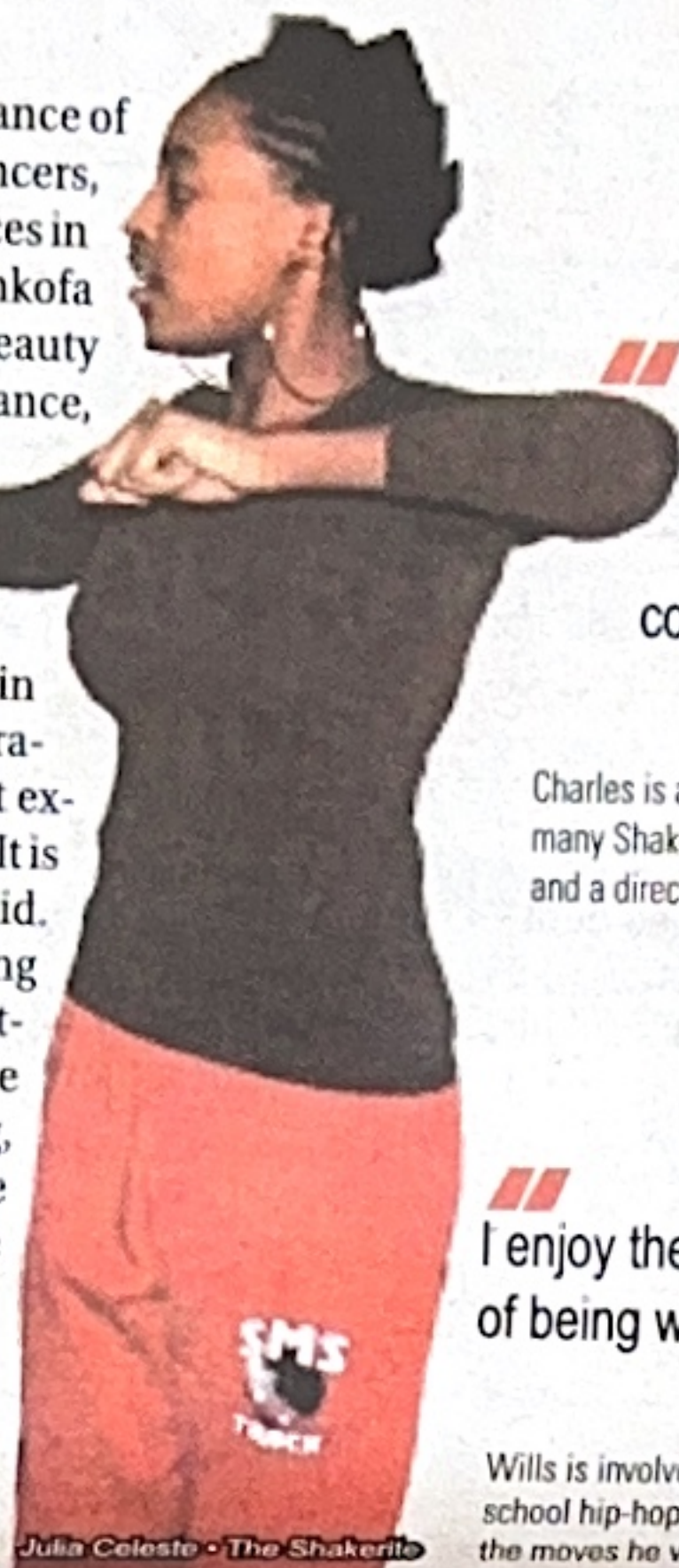
DIVERSITY THROUGH DANCE

• Change anchors this year's Sankofa celebration of African-American history Feb. 27 -28

BY JULIA CELESTE
LIMELIGHT EDITOR

Sankofa, Shaker's annual artistic performance of African-American history, comprises dancers, singers and actors from all grades and races in keeping with its mission of diversity. "Sankofa is definitely not a talent show. It displays the beauty of black history. We incorporate information, dance, singing and poetry, all of which helped to shape black history," explained senior member Anique Thomas. Thomas has participated in Sankofa for the past four years and has been a drama leader since her sophomore year. "It's a great experience... both writing and directing the plays. It is great to share African-American history," she said.

Graphics teacher Keaf Holiday is directing the production solo this year, and consequently, additional pressure has been placed on the shoulders of the student leaders in the singing, dancing and acting portions. "It is for sure more stressful," said senior Brittany Billups, dance leader. There are approximately 100 people in the full-scale production of this year's show, which features a theme of Change. According to Sankofa members, students should keep their eyes open for a dance to "Diva," by Beyoncé, which is, "bound to be extraordinary."



One of the things I love about Sankofa is getting the opportunity to see new company members every year.

Tempest Charles
senior

Charles is a former Sankofa member and an actress in many Shaker school productions, including "Ragtime," and a director for New Stages 27.



I enjoy the excitement and the atmosphere of being with the other people in the cast.

Keon Willis
junior Sankofa member

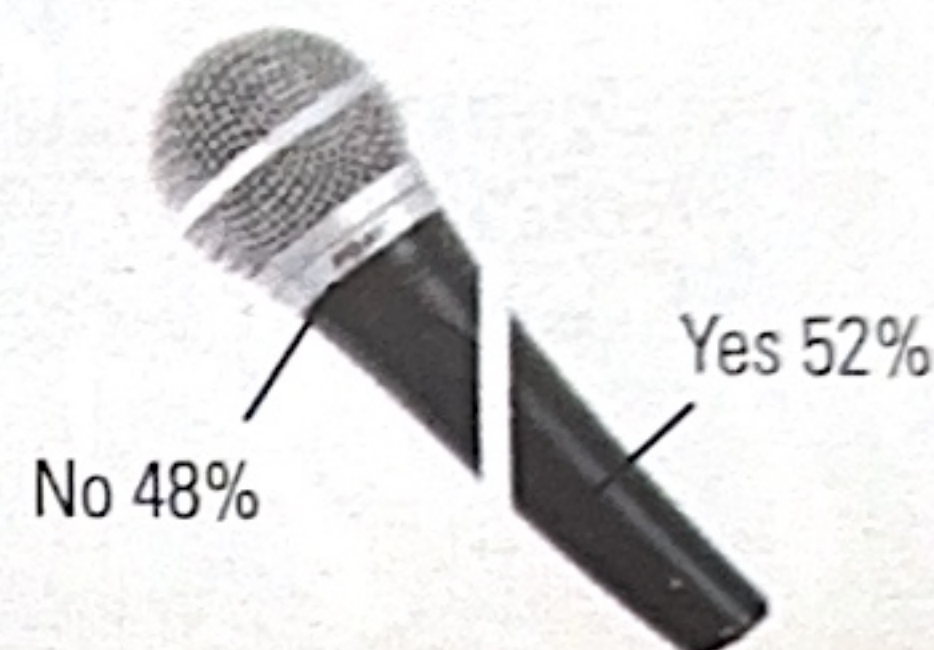
Willis is involved in the dance portion of the show. Old school hip-hop choreography and somersaults are among the moves he will perform in Sankofa.



DO YOU LEARN ANYTHING FROM SANKOFA?

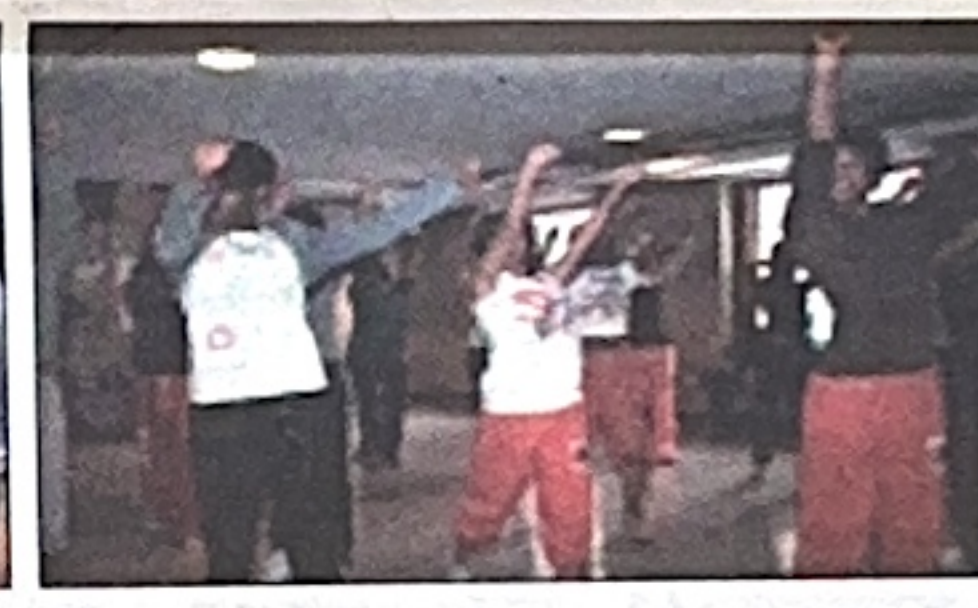


DO YOU ENJOY SEEING SANKOFA?



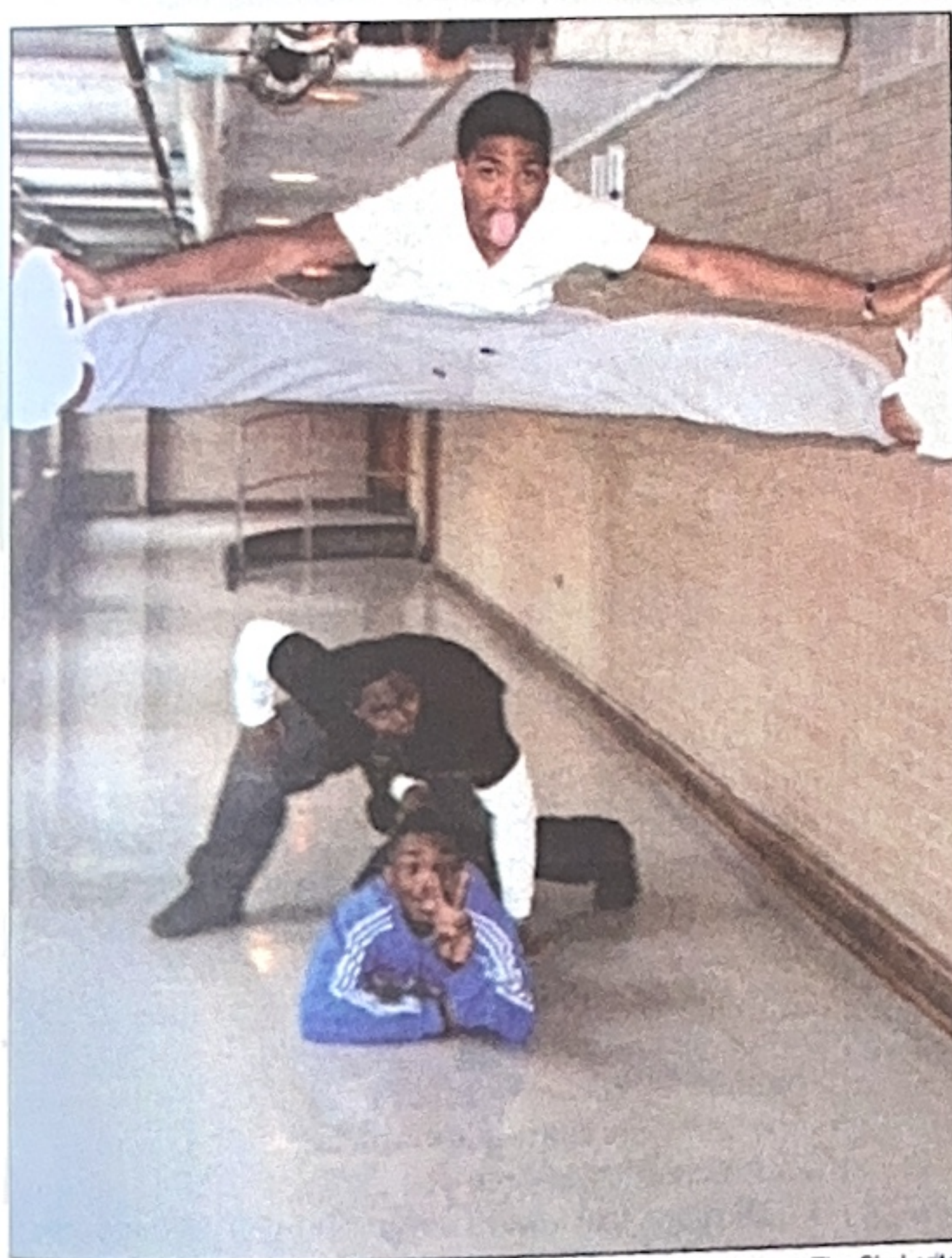
A scientific telephone poll of 100 students conducted by The Shakerite staff, margin of error +/- 10 percent.

Infographic by Julia Celeste



Photos by Allie Levin • The Shakerite

SANKOFA MEMBERS REHEARSE for their upcoming show, whose theme is "Change." The students will act, sing and dance in the production. There will be a preview for the school Feb. 27, the day the show goes up.



Julia Celeste • The Shakerite

JUNIORS RYAN THURMAN and Keon Willis admire junior Kristopher Terry's high-flying split during Sankofa practice in the dance room. This year's performance will emphasize dance.

Billups leads Sankofa dancers

BY JULIA CELESTE
LIMELIGHT EDITOR

Brittany Billups is a senior dance captain for this year's Sankofa performance, which features a theme of change. The Sankofa cast will preview their show for students during the school day Feb. 27. Evening performances will take place Feb. 27-28.

Q: What exactly does a dance captain do?

A: I organize the members of Sankofa, find music for the show. I do costumes -- this year it is Obama T-shirts -- auditions for the dance portion and some of the choreography.



Brittany Billups

Q: How did auditions for Sankofa work?

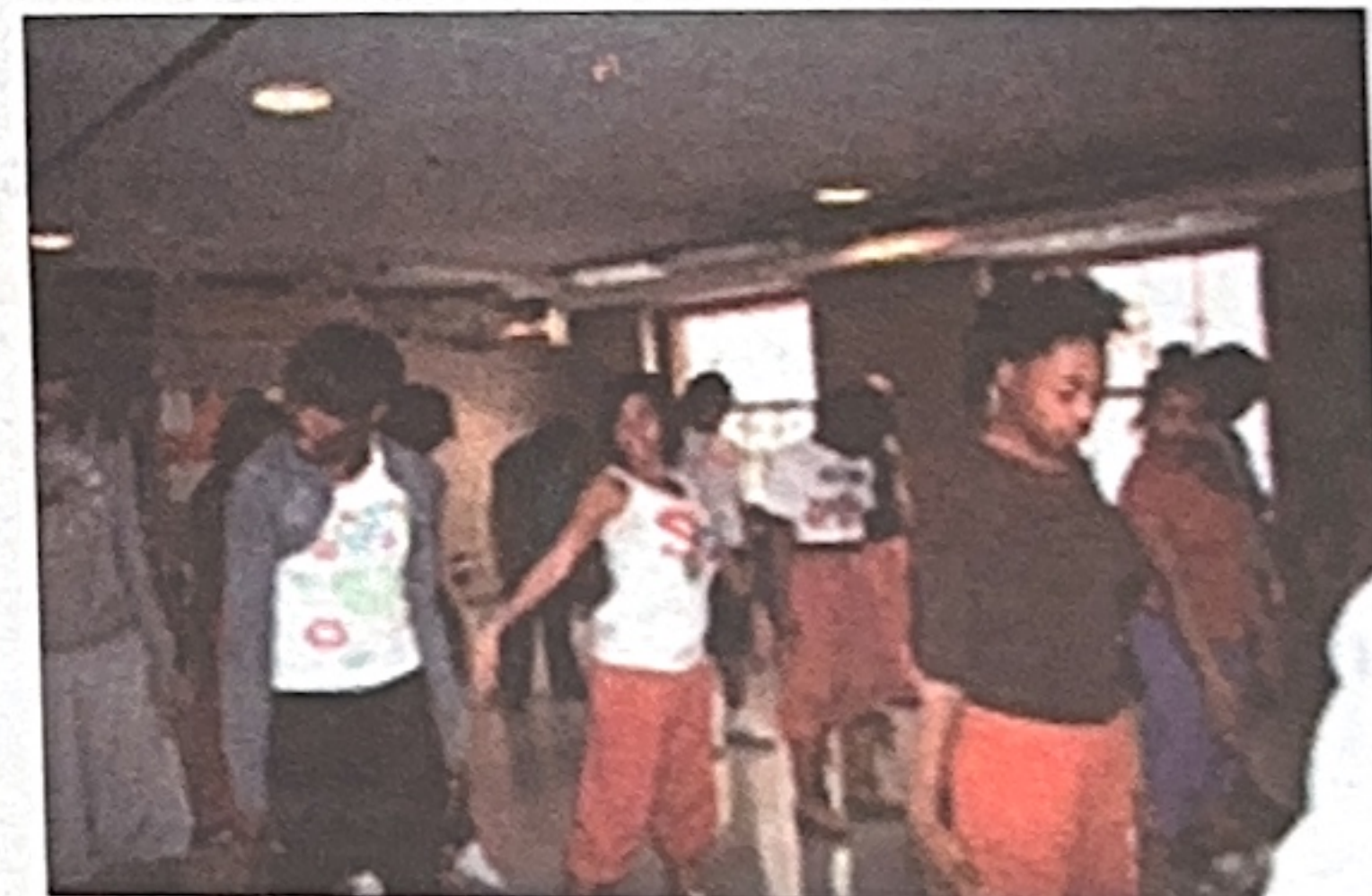
A: We taught them a dance [one from last year's show] and then they had to perform it. Then they had to do freestyle to the same song. We judged based on whether or not they had the moves down. For singing, every person auditioning had to sing "Lift Every Voice and Sing," and for drama they had to read a poem, dramatically.

Q: What are the different traditions of Sankofa?

A: Traditions of Sankofa include an African dance in the intro of the show, and someone always sings "Lift Every Voice and Sing." Libation -- the pouring of water onto a plant in honor of the elders, the people who have done this before us. There is always a hip-hop dance and a drama and singing section.

Q: How did you and the other leaders land on change as the theme for this year's show?

A: We all got together with Mr. [Keaf] Holliday in the graphics



Julia Celeste • The Shakerite

BRITTANY BILLUPS AND other dance leaders teach fellow Sankofa members the dance to Beyoncé's "Diva."

room, eat chips and salsa and bounce ideas off one another. We just got talking about current events, change, the new president and it arose out of that conversation.

Q: What is the best part of Sankofa?

A: The best part of Sankofa in general is the bonding that takes place. We have so little time together to make the show happen, so advisers and participants have to make the extra effort outside of school with phone calls and extra rehearsals. It is actually a lot of fun.

Shaker Speaks

02.26.09

1 TOUCHY SUBJECT IS BETTER THAN 2

In Connecticut, police shot Travis the 200-pound chimpanzee after he mauled a woman. In Denver, President Obama signed his \$787 stimulus bill. In Washington, cartoonist Sean Delonas put the two together. The New York Post ran his cartoon, which depicts a monkey shot by two policemen, one of whom states, "They'll have to find someone else to write the next stimulus bill." The cartoon, which appeared to liken Obama to a chimp, drew criticism from African-American New York Governor David Paterson, the liberal blogosphere and Al Sharpton. Delonas has been called "the Picasso of prejudice." Is the cartoon tasteless? Yes. Racist? Probably not.

EVAN WHEELER

THEY'LL HAVE TO FIND SOMEONE ELSE TO WRITE THE NEXT STIMULUS BILL



guardian.co.uk

FALLING BY THE WAYSIDE

• At Shaker, the only rule is the exception. Here's a look at 4 policies and their chances of survival.

EATING IN THE CAFETERIA

For years, the cafeteria was cramped and loud, and students sought refuge in hallways, stairwells and empty classrooms during lunch. The district wisely devoted \$2 million to expanding the space. After the additional two-story cafeteria was built, space was no longer an issue, and to prevent hallway convoys of students carrying trays of food, the administration mandated that students eat outside or in the cafeteria. A year later, the rule is more often enforced than not. But lately, travelling diners are visible in the halls. As spring approaches, we expect more students to challenge the cafeteria mandate. Will the administration hold the fort?

GOING . . .

PARKING LOTS

Parking lots have always been designated for employees and visitors. However, student drivers regularly and brazenly defy this rule. Occasionally, a student is called down to the office and "warned." Security personnel are instructed to interrupt classes in search of students who have parked illegally so that they can move their cars. About 15 years ago, cars were towed. Today, enforcement is lax. Pressure falls on teachers to police the lot, and those who do hear "I do it all the time," or "You're the only person who's ever told me not to park here."

GOING . . .

DETENTIONS

The administration has always encouraged teachers to individually assess disciplinary situations; thus, it is completely at their discretion whether to assign detentions. When teachers do decide to actually penalize students for misbehaving, they will typically assign students to stay 20 or 30 minutes after school for detention, or if the behavior is more extreme, extended study detention (3-5 p.m.). However, students regularly skip teacher-assigned detentions, and both parties come back the next day and act as if nothing happened. That teachers are not more adamant about enforcing the policy is a travesty and only serves to encourage misbehavior and a disrespectful attitude toward school officials who fail to enforce anything. In the 1980s, the unit principals ran detention, ensuring not only attendance, but also a serious attitude once students got there.

GONE.

LOWER CAFETERIA

The district renovated the cafeteria and designated the lower level as a waiting area where students could socialize after school while awaiting rides home. The arrangement would solve the problem of loitering students disrupting conferences after school. Students, however, often remained in the cafeteria, sometimes until 7 p.m. Not surprisingly, problems ensued. A fight that broke out there Feb. 13 prompted the administration to abandon the plan. The administration decided that the area was not a "high school day care," and closed the doors after 3 p.m. Now, we're back to rowdy students carrying on outside classrooms during conferences. The correct solution, in the Editorial Board's opinion, is not to prohibit activity in the lower cafeteria after school, but to take an active role in removing misbehaving students from the building.

Change comes only with help

Change. Progress. Hope. Unity. These are the ideals that President Barack Obama asked us to consider when he was sworn in as our 44th president.

I was among the millions there on Jan. 20, 2009. Standing in the crowd was possibly the most exciting and riveting moment of my life. All I could think about was the changes to come -- the change we had all been promised.

But his speech was about so much more than the specific things that he plans to achieve in his first term of office; it was about the relationship that he wants to have with the American people and about the relationship that the public should expect to have with its government.

The crowd was ready for anything. Most people like myself had been standing around in cold for the eight hours preceding the ceremony. We were all wide-awake and dancing to the recorded music from the concert performed the Sunday before in honor of the day.

It was fun to see the change in people's attitude toward the government.

Now, a month later, the magic man persona that overwhelmed the crowd in Washington is gone, and because very few people were actually listening to Obama's words while they were absorbing Obama's energy, we are stuck once again.

Consider Obama's first month in office: key cabinet nominees had to withdraw, his highly anticipated bipartisan approach to the economic crisis crashed and burned. The person who I thought -- who Americans thought -- would be able to make a change is bogged down in the usual political quicksand.

President Obama said, "It is ultimately the faith and determination of the American people upon which this nation relies." If we listen to the words of his inaugural address we see that it isn't a speech full of great insight but rather one of warning.

The crowd wanted words full of hope and he provided them, but first he gave us all something else: he cautioned that we have to work for a better America. In government and in life the easy path isn't always the best one. Sometimes it takes confidence and purpose to walk down a harder path and the success from that is much larger.

Obama presented us with a multitude of choices: in the primary it was him or Clinton, in the general election him or McCain and now the choice is between hope and fear. "America [is] bigger than the sum of our individual ambitions; greater than all the differences of birth or wealth or faction . . . and it is this journey we continue today," he declared.

These choices are irrelevant, though, if Congress doesn't choose wisely as well.

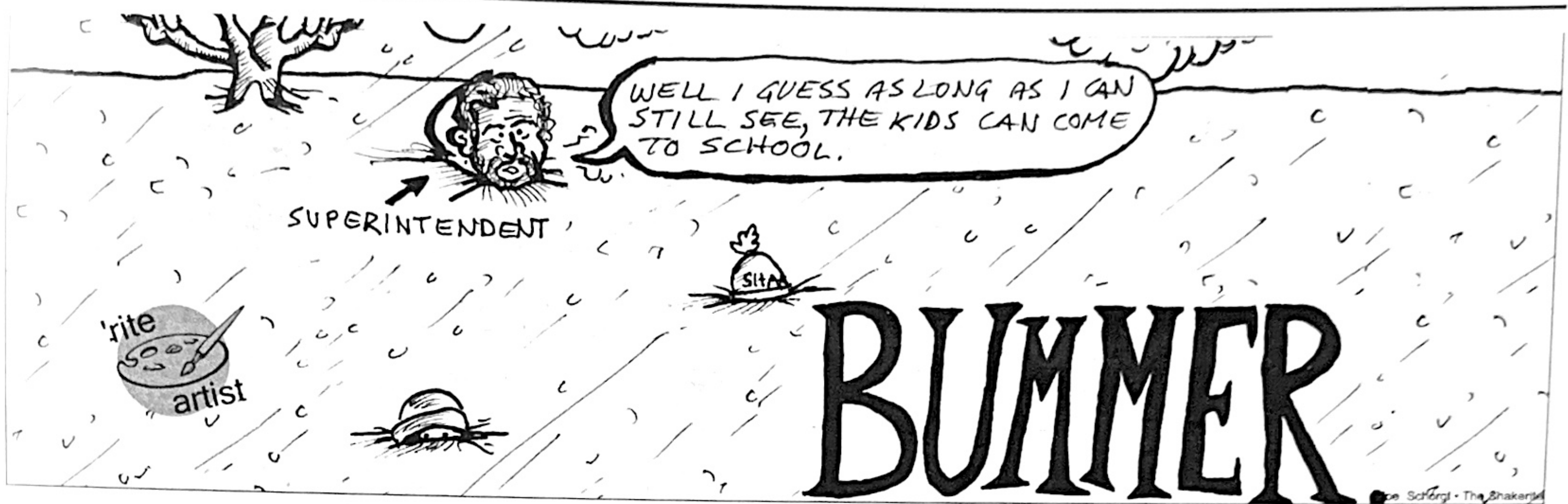
The good will toward the government evident at the inauguration will soon disappear if politicians don't join the public in the transition from past to present, from me to we and from fear to hope.



JULIA CELESTE



Infographic by Evan Wheeler



FREEMAN'S DECISION LEAVES US ADRIPT

The administration's decision to hold school Jan. 28 despite the treacherous winter storm frustrated Shaker parents, teachers and students. Nearly the entire county shut down due to heavy snow, which made roads unsafe for driving, walking and waiting for the bus. As usual, people were put in hazardous situations in order to get to and from school, an unnecessary risk that could have been easily prevented with a snow day, a rarity in the Shaker Heights City School District.

Did Superintendent Mark Freeman fail to even realize that children as young as 5 would find themselves battling sub-freezing conditions, traveling on icy sidewalks and waiting for buses as cars handled by inexperienced high school drivers swerved nearby? Did he think about nervous parents who missed work because they followed their instincts and drove their children to school? Did he consider that parents stayed home from work due to the unsafe road conditions only to find their children were still expected to make it to school in one piece?

Many parents chose to keep their students at home that day. In a letter to district personnel, Freeman seemed eager to delegate the calculation of danger to parents. "Parents who believe that it would be too risky to send their children to school always have the option of keeping them home. These are treated as excused absences as long as the parent follows the usual procedure of calling the school to report the absence," he stated. As leader of the district, the super-

intendent should not take a pass on his duty to close school when conditions clearly require it.

Once those who attended actually got to school, the day was largely unproductive, at least at the high school. During the first few periods of the day, teachers were absent and students strolled in late, covered in snow and irritated that they had to sit through sparsely populated classes while snow continued to quickly accumulate outside. When the school day finally came to a close, custodians, security personnel, administrators, teachers and students pushed cars out of the parking lots at the high school, where two-foot drifts had stranded every vehicle that lacked four-wheel drive. Shoving snow-bound cars in a busy parking lot is dangerous and not part of anyone's job description, those who participated risked injury for which the district could be liable.

Further evidence that the decision was flawed came from the Shaker Heights Police Department, which contacted Principal Michael Griffith after threatening to ticket all cars parked on the oval because the city needed to clear the streets. Although Griffith handled the situation and no students incurred parking violations, that the police and Griffith had this conversation at all is yet another indictment of Freeman's judgment.

Compelled to understand Freeman's irrational decision, people engaged in speculation throughout the day. Some

said Freeman made the no-call from California; others said they saw him at the high school during the day or that they witnessed him standing in his nicely plowed driveway at home. One of the most persistent theories concerned the district's demographics. People speculated that because 28 percent of Shaker students live below the poverty line, according to the district figures from the 2007-08 school year, the district is not permitted to call off school because those students rely on the federally subsidized meal programs for sustenance.

District Communications Director Peggy Caldwell denied this was the case, saying that students' economic conditions were not considered. Interestingly, however, the Cleveland and Cleveland Heights-University Heights schools were the only other districts in Cuyahoga County open Jan. 28; both serve significant populations of impoverished students.

If Jan. 28 were the first time we were endangered by Freeman's determination to defy nature, perhaps we could find a bit of sympathy for the superintendent, whose inbox was most likely flooded with lengthy e-mails challenging his decision. But Shaker continues to be the rare or lone school district open on these potentially fatal days, and we would rather not write stories about accidents, injuries or fatalities because the school district fails to employ common sense.



Students, teachers and parents challenge Freeman's choice

Shaker Speaks surveyed faculty about Freeman's decision. Not surprisingly, the response rate was high. Here is a sampling of faculty opinion:

"Do we as a district not learn from previous experiences?"

"I was going sideways down Fairmount Blvd. Almost killed a man standing by his car that had slid off the road."

"Very few professions receive the day off with bad weather. We need to be prepared to get to work in spite of bad weather. We need banks, and other workers."

"I got stuck in the High School North parking lot because they hadn't plowed before I got to work or during the day. There was literally 1 foot of snow. I wasn't the only one. We all had to push each other out. Several of us fell, luckily I don't think anybody was hurt. But this was absolutely NOT safe conditions and grounds crew was not able to clear the parking lot obviously due to the weather, no fault of theirs, they're not superhuman."

"It was a wasted day from an educational standpoint."

"My students told me that they feel as if our Superintendent doesn't care about them."

Senior Shannon Charles expressed her frustration in an email to Superintendent Mark Freeman, whom she believes did not take students' well-being into consideration:

I would not consider myself a student that does not value my education, nor am I the sort of student that expects to be let out of school just to stay home and relax but I do however believe that the safety of the Shaker Heights faculty and students should come first. I read in the press release sent out by the district that in Shaker Heights the streets are plowed regularly, it is not necessary to close school as often as most districts. With all due respect, therefore this statement was clearly made by someone living on the "right" side of Shaker. For those of us who are not fortunate enough to live on what has been rightfully named the "right" side of Shaker, the streets are not plowed regularly, in fact, they usually remain unplowed. I would ask that you would consider the percentage of the school district that may live in these areas when making the decision whether or not you should close school. I appreciate your dedication and I hope strongly that you look beyond the test scores and grade point averages and remember that you are working with real, living human beings. Thank you for your time, Shannon Charles

Scott Smith, a Shaker parent, conveys his feelings about Freeman's attitude toward snow days:

As you all know, this isn't the first time the wrong decision was made and for that, Shaker was plastered all over the public news with Dr. Freeman apologizing for his mishap. Well, in regards to yesterday's debacle, maybe, just maybe, Dr. Freeman will understand that transportation and very bad weather don't mix, which inevitably places our kids' safety at risk. It resulted in invariably inexperienced high school drivers having to travel through almost impassable roads. This decision could have been a disastrous outcome. For the critical decisions that we continue to allow him to make, and in addition, not to mention the kind of salary we, the taxpayers are paying him, I strongly believe he (Dr. Freeman) needs to look in the mirror and finally realize that this job might be too difficult for him to handle especially when our kids' safety remains at the forefront. The reputation of Shaker's Schools remains high and tough decisions will continue to be made. I hope the school board will finally realize that when Dr. Freeman's contract is up for renewal, the taxpayers of Shaker deserve a Superintendent that can consistently make those tough decisions before another poor and potentially fatal decision is made. Sincerely, Scott Smith

Raider Zone

02.26.09



FRESHMAN STAR MAKES VARSITY

Terry Rozier is a freshman, but his age does not diminish his talent on the basketball court. The guard first began playing at age 8 and hasn't looked back since. He averages 20 minutes per game and has joined an elite group. "Rozier is the fifth freshman to make varsity during my 24 years of coaching at Shaker . . . he's got a lot of guts and a lot of heart," Coach Bob Wonson said. Being one of the youngest players on the varsity team, Rozier looks up to his elders, particularly Anthony Wells. "He's not just a leader on the court, but he's also a leader off the court . . . he helps me out with school stuff," Rozier said. Wells admires his young teammate. "He's the franchise. I feel comfortable with the ball in his hands. He's really mature for a freshman. He's fearless," Wells said.



Terry Rozier

PATRICK POHLMAN

KARISMA

"STONEFACE" PENN



PENN TOWERS OVER COMPETITION

BY COLIN JACKSON AND PATRICK POHLMAN
THE BEAT EDITOR AND RAIDERS ZONE EDITOR

"Wow, you are tall!" was the embarrassing exclamation budding round-ball wizard Karisma Penn often heard as a second grader at Mercer. The size that gave the calm youngster an advantage on the court then has helped make her a nationally ranked player today. Docile dominance is the only way to describe senior forward Karisma Penn's style. Standing at 6'2", the co-captain of the girls' varsity basketball team is a force to be reckoned with on both sides of the court. With a stone-faced glare, she conquers all in her path.

Unlike many prominent Shaker Middle School athletes, Penn remained a Raider for her freshman season instead of switching to a private school such as Regina or Hathaway Brown, which were both interested in her. At the varsity level, however, Penn's size advantage no longer sufficed.

"I never had to work hard when I was young . . . I always felt I was one of the best players in the area," said Penn, who was rudely awakened when she sat on the bench for the first time in her life. Like every other freshman, she struggled to get playing time.

Struggles would continue during Penn's sophomore season, which was cut short by a tear in her meniscus. "I had surgery that put me out for six months, and during rehab I had to lift weights and see a therapist three times a week . . . coming back to the team junior year I wanted to make a name for myself," she said.

A summer spent traveling for Amateur Athletic Union basketball placed Penn on an unofficial talent-ranking list and got her ready for her junior season. Penn succeeded that year, attracting scouts from Division I schools such as Oklahoma, Illinois, Arizona and the University of Southern California. After visiting several campuses, she verbally committed to Illinois in October and plans to sign with them this spring. "I had never really heard of Illinois," Penn said. "I had to really experience it."

Penn's ability to score is undeniable; despite abuse from defenders, she makes it to the rim. "On the court she's a huge presence on both ends of the floor, a go-to person on offense, and on defense, she cannot only guard the perimeter but is a great shot blocker," Coach Don Readance said. Penn attributes a lot of her toughness to playing hard-fought games during summer vacation with her two 6-foot brothers, who demanded strong play. Penn's height, arm length and hand size multiply her advantage. Offensively, Penn has a surprisingly quick first step for a player her size and has developed a solid 15-foot jump shot that extends defenses and opens up the middle of the floor. Penn's ball control makes her a threat from any location; two dribbles from any direction and she is at the basket and in motion to score. She throws beautiful outlet passes that initiate fast breaks often finished by senior guard Jasmine Jones or junior guard Kahdeja Young. "She is becoming more of a leader off the court . . . the girls follow her lead since she is such an intense player," Readance said.

STATISTICS

Freshman year: 13.1 points, 11.2 rebounds, 2.5 blocks

Junior year: 19.4 points, 12.3 rebounds, 3.2 blocks

Player of the year in lake division in LEL

#18 in ESPNu hoopgurlz 100 and #8 on scout.com

Verbally committed to Illinois in October of 2008



Photo illustration by John Fletcher

SENIOR FORWARD KARISMA Penn scores a layup against Kenmore High School in a 27-point performance Tuesday, Feb. 17. This was the Raiders' last game of the regular season. Penn averaged 20 points per game during her senior year.

John Fletcher • The Shakerite